The COMIC CRUSADER

SPRING ISSUE

NO. 5

35¢

FEATURING
This Issue:

GARDNER F. FOX

CRUSADER COMMENTS

Greetings, my fellow fans. Glad to have you along. This issue of The Comic Crusader marks my second year of publishing my own fanzine. Looking back, over the past year, I owe much to many fans and pros alike.

JIM STERANKO has my undying thanks. For it was his interview, that graced my very first issue and his art, represented on this issue's cover and his full page Nick Fury drawing, last issue, that helped my publication attain the status that it has today. Jim, you're a true friend. STEVE DITKO too, has helped my publication tremendously. His kindness to an unknown makes me very proud that I know him. Steve - What can I say? JOHN FANTUCCHIO brought his tremendous talents to these pages, giving this zine the extra bit of class it needed. And Steve Fritz. With this issue, Steve becomes a regular staff member. His art ranks with the best. Glad to have you Steve. You'll notice, in this issue, that I have not spotlighted any fan. Because of the abundance of material, I had no room. However, next issue, you'll meet DONNA L. ASTIN one of the top female fans around. TOM FAGAN is another friend I couldn't do without. His Airboy article and other material he's done for me, makes this zine really fly.

Looking ahead to this year, I'm very pleased to have a fan, that I've admired since I brought my first fanzine, contribute to Crusader. His name-RONN FOSS. From Hawaii comes another new staff member - DENNIS FUJITAKE. His work is some of the best I've seen and it's represented by my back cover. You'll hear more about him and some other fans from Hawaii, next issue. Other fans who have contributed are - Bill Wilson, John Lawrence, PAL, John McGeehan, Wade Hampton and the guy I couldn't do an issue without - last, but far from the least- BOB COSGROVE.

I'd like to take the remaining space to voice an opinion about two things I've noticed in Fandom of late. First - Recently, I've been asked by some other zines, to offer my opinion on politics and world affairs. I've declined, for the following reason. Fandom is a place where one should enjoy the hobby he is interested in - Reading Comics! Not that fans don't have opinions, but a fanzine isn't the vehicle to voice them in. If you want to read or comment about politics, and the like, read or send letters to Newsweek or Time. My second beef, is derogatory articles about comic pros. Recently, I read an article entitled, "Slobberin' Stan Lee". Needless to say, the article was anti-Lee. Fandom may dislike a pro, but remember this - These men are in a business. They work at selling a product. No fan has the right to insult them. They deserve the same respect you would give anyone else you do business with. Disagree, yes, but do it with taste. Here's hoping you enjoy this and the coming issues of Comic Crusader.

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The Sub-Mariner drawing comes to me through the courtesy of Bill Wilson, editor of THE COLLECTOR.

Copyright National Per

The Fan In Mind

This column is an irregular one, devoted to the furthering of our hobby, The Reading of Comics. The topic this issue:

selective buying

by
D. L. DILLINGER

Capt. Marvel Jr.

(Copyright...Fawcett Pub.)

I think we recognize that certain titles consistently have good material (Fantastic Four, Thunder Agents, etc.) and therefore they sell at a premium price. There are other titles, however, which may have had good material for just a few issues (like Jack Kirby drawing Green Arrow in ADVENTURE COMICS 250-256). Comics like these can be picked up for 50¢-$1.25 each, where-as better known Kirby art in other titles draw a much higher price.

The following is meant to be a guide (by no means complete!) to selective buying in the SECOND HEROIC AGE OF COMICS (1955 to present). I've found that because few people know the value of these select comics, you can often buy them in Fanzines very reasonably; and by showing them to local fans, really have a trading edge. Even a Marvel Addict might trade for some Kirby or Wally Wood material by another company.

Most collectors don't list these select issues differently, or at a higher price, usually for three reasons: (1) Too much trouble and ad space, (2) Fandom in general doesn't know about it, and therefore won't pay more, (3) They weren't aware of the difference themselves, anyway.

NATIONAL COMICS

ADVENTURE Any issue before 208 (1955) except for 205, has Johnny Quick; a predecessor to our modern-day Flash. Needless to say, both Johnny Quick, and Superboy debuted in ADVENTURE 103. #247 Is the first Legion of Super Heroes. #250-256 Has some fine Jack Kirby art on Green Arrow, 256 is G.A.'s origin.

CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN 1-7 Jack Kirby did the first seven issues, Wally Wood teamed up with Kirby on 4-7 for some of the finest art in Comicdom ever. #64,65 Reprints their very first story and origin, as presented in Showcase #6. If you missed these two recent ones, you can probably pick them up at a 2nd hand comic book store for 6-8¢ each.

MYSTERY IN SPACE 87-91 Along with the fine Adam Strange strip, Hawkman appeared in these issues.

SUPERMAN 76 A real gem, the first joint appearance of the Superman, Batman team. #146 Superman's origin and life story.

WORLD'S FINEST #71 First issue with Batman & Superman in the same story. #94 Origin of the Superman, Batman team.

And of course NATIONAL wouldn't be complete without mentioning SHOWCASE and THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD...to cover each issue would be too time consumeing--but basically remember this:

SHOWCASE #4,6-14 are valuable 4,8,13,14 having the FLASH
6,7,11,12, having the CHALLS by Kirby
9,10 having Lois Lane, with SUPERMAN

#5 as well as 1-3, were not Super-heroes, and have less of a value. 15-21 are taken up by SPACE RANGER (15-16), ADAM STRANGE (17-19), and HIP HUNTER (20,21), 22-24 however are GREEN LANTERN.

SHOWCASE and BRAVE & BOLD command high prices, and are well known. They are included here for the sake of the "unenlightened few".

BRAVE & BOLD No super-heroes until the J.L.A. in #26-30, and many issues after that were not super-hero material also, be careful.

Now lets skip to other publishers.

PEP 127-142,144 and LAUGH 150-160, 168 Although not featured on the cover, all those issues had either a JAGUAR, FLY, or FLY GIRL story. THE FLY 1-4 and PVT. STRONG (SHIELD)1-2 Were done by Jack Kirby.

Most people know that Paul Reinman's version of the Golden Age SHIELD debuted in FLYMAN #31 (1965), which isn't too valuable; but Kirby's different version (1959-1960) in addition to appearing in his own comic (PVT. STRONG), appeared in short two page stories in THE FLY 1-4 and then by another artist teamed up with the FLY in #8, and #9. Also of note; the Golden Age BLACK HOOD made his comeback in FLY #7, and appeared again in #10.

KING'S - FLASH GORDON

1,4,5 Had Al Williamson
7 Had Mac Raboy reprints
9,10 Had Alex Raymond reprints
6,8,11, #2 and #3 were done by other artists, and in the opinion of many fans, not worth much.
12 Had Reed Crandall
13 Had Jeff Jones

Also for FLASH GORDON fans, Wally Wood drew a short F.G. feature in PHANTOM #18 and Gil Kane did the last two parts of the series in PHANTOM #19 and #20.

Also, little known is that the PEACEMAKER debuted in Fighting Five #40, and again appeared in #41.

Of over 100 issues of HARVEY HITS published (1957-1966), only eight have any value, they are: 1,6,12,15,26,36,44,48 all of which have some fine Wilson McCoy or Ray Moore art on the PHANTOM. Some of the HARVEY HITS are reprints from the early 1940's. THE SPIRIT #1,2 Some beautiful Will Eisner work. FIGHTING AMERICAN #1 A must for SIMON & KIRBY fans. BLAST OFF#1 (1965) An all Al Williamson, Jack Kirby issue. UN-EARTHLY SPECTACULARS #2,3, Both are 64pg. comics. #2 has Williamson, Wood, and Gil Kane. #3 has some Kirby and Williamson art. #1 is a 32 pg. comic and not worth as much.

It would be wise to get some of the SUPER or I.W. reprint comics, especially the PLASTICMAN (11,16,18), and THE SPIRIT (12). Other titles contain lesser known Golden Age super-heroes, and if the price is right, it wouldn't hurt to get a few (Doll Man, Daring Adventures, Danger, etc.)

HAPPY COLLECTING! D.L. DILLINGER 4205 NOTTER AVE. JACKSONVILLE, FLA. 32206.

AIRBOY PART 2

"AND DID YOU NOT

Airboy was first introduced to aerial combat in November of 1942. The story fairly sparkled with the red, white and blue patriotism Americans, in those days, were unashamed to express openly. Since America, by proclamation, went to war with Japan first in World War II, it was only natural that Airboy's first enemy encounter would be with the Japanese.

The Japs have found out about the mysterious bird-plane. Indeed, many of their own airplanes have been downed by it. And so, Hirote, "our air ace supreme," is leading a Japanese squadron heading toward California. And it is off the California coastline that Airboy has his first real taste of combat. The dialogue went like this:

"Their Squadron Leader Sees Me! Here He Comes, Bird Plane! We'll Show 'em The Stuff We Americans Are Made Of! How About It!!!

Hirote, likewise, has his own intentions. The reader is told the Jap pilot has 68 planes to his discredit. Viewing Airboy and the bird-plane, Hirote grins evilly, "Soon It Will Be 69!!!"

However, Airboy gives a good accounting of himself. The bird-plane is driven from the skies only by lack of fuel. Airboy lands the plane and even under heaving strafing fire is able to roll it to safety. As the Japs turn to leave, a note is dropped. Airboy reads it exclaiming, "I'll Be Darned! Hirote Is The King of Jap Aces! This Is A Real Challenge!!!"

Hirote's taunting message reads, "Honorable Fighter... Must Go Now, But Would Like Dogfight With You 30 Days From Now...Same Day--Same Time--Same Place. If Acceptable, Please Fire Gun And Bring Plenty Gas!" It was signed, "Hirote!"

Naturally, Airboy fired the gun accepting the challenge. And the story's end fairly crackled with excitement promising, "Next Month...The Most Thrilling Air Duel Ever Fought In The Heavens. Is Hirote On The Level Or Is This A Trap To Snare Davy's Mystery Plane? Watch And See!!!"

Certainly this was a challenge to the reader too. And Air Fighters Comics, Vol.1, No.3, December, 1942, became one of the most eagerly awaited of all issues. Unknown as yet to the reader, Airboy would not only come up against the Jap war powers, he would have his first crack at the Germans too. Airboy was getting into the war fast.

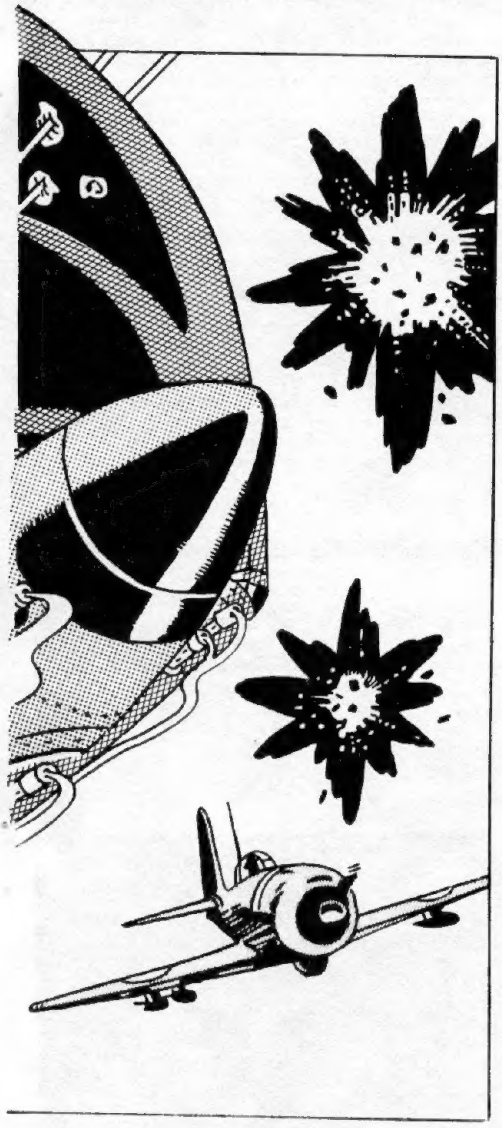
Before continuing with what happened between Airboy and Hirote a comment or two is needed. Birdie was not known officially as Birdie until the second Airboy story. Airboy's first reference to it as a "Bat Plane," lends speculation that had not a certain bat-plane already been coursing through the pages of Detective and BatMan Comics, published by rivals of Hillman, Birdie might have been named the Bat-Plane. Her bat-like wings would have made the name a fitting one.

Comics, particularly before the Comics Code of the '50's, were often accused of hidden symbolism. Little or any of this is to be found in Airboy stories, yet those who choose to ponder such things may have wondered at the author's erotic choise of "69" as the number for Hirote's next-intended conquest.

In startling yellows, reds and blacks, the cover of the December, 1942 issue of Air Fighters Comics presented itself to the reader. Ripping through a mockup of Page 1 of the "TOKIO NEWS" with its shocking banner headline reading AIRBOY DEAD and a smaller bank headline, ZERO DOWNS BIRD PLANE IN FLAMES, was Birdie herself--all six machine guns blazing, and Airboy gallantly seated in the cockpit, with a laughing, "Sez You!"! And you just knew you were in for a thrilling treat by the message at the lower right corner, "LIFT THIS COVER-SEE THE GREATEST AIR FIGHT IN HISTORY!"

Hillman, in its early Airboy stories, had a habit of introducing a secondary plot that would reach a conclusion in the next issue to keep a reader at fever pitch of continuing interest. This story was no exception. A vivid splash panel

HEAR OF A HERO YOUNG?"



showed Nazi planes in aerial combat over a war-torn city, though nowhere in the main story would this scene unfold.

A circle insert at the upper left of the panel showed Airboy climbing into Birdie and saying, "All Right, Hirote, Birdie And I Will Be Coming Up There To Meet You--And Only One Of Us Is Coming Back, Japsy--Only ONE Of Us!!"

Hirote is shown in a circle insert at the lower right. Two Japanese officers are talking to him. Says one, "Honor Of Entire Nation Rests On You, Hirote! The Rising Sun Must NOT Be Dimmed By Defeat By White Weakling!!"

Cautions the other officer, "Please, Once Again-Let Us Send Many Pursuit Planes With You For Safety Against Sad, Uncontrolable Accident In Battle!!" Hirote spurns their offer but the impression is clearly left to a youthful American reader's mind, Japanese are really never to be trusted.

Considering in actuality the sneak attack of the Japanese on the American Pearl Harbor was not yet a year old and was not comic book fiction but real-life, this propaganda whipping up of war hatred against the Japanese is excusable.

Before Airboy was to meet Hirote, the reader is introduced to the secondary storyline. Hubert Kritzel is directing a movie staring "the nation's favorite young actress, Deanna Darling. The producers are dissatisfied and criticize Kritzel, complaining, "You've Got Nazi Airmen Looking Like Handsome Heroes Instead of Villains."

(Actually many Hollywood movies of the war years depicted Germans, Italians and Japanese either as bumbling, inept, ludicrous buffons or out and out villains. It wasn't until years had passed and World War II was long over before movies were made by American companies humanizing "the enemy.")

Kritzel is infuriated. But the producers' criticizm is well-founded for the director is a German spy. With an infra-red camera he photographs the interior of the top-secret "Falcon Flying Fortress," sending this valuable information on to the Germans.

But Kritzel has fallen in love with Deanna Darling and kidnaps her in a stolen plane. Enroute to a waiting submarine lying off San Francisco, Kritzel and the unwilling Miss Darling encounter Airboy and Birdie who are winging their way to meet Hirote. As Deanna Darling is fighting off Kritzel, their plane dives uncontrolably earthward. Airboy maneuvers Birdie directly over Kritzel's craft--"Her Wheels Bend In--Gripping Kritzel's Plane In Vulture-Like Fashon. Both planes level out on a level flying course with Birdie still grasping the other craft. Hand to hand combat in the skies. Kritzel parachutes to earth, where he hears Airboy promise to meet Miss Darling at her home after he keeps an "appointment." Of course the appointment is with Hirote and Airboy again takes off in Birdie not realizing he is being followed by Kritzel, who has commandeered his own craft which thanks to Birdie was also landed safely.

Hirote is waiting. Airboy flys alongside his opponent. There is no gallantry passed between the two fighting aces. Airboy's comment is a sneering, "How Could Anyone With A Face Like That Shoot Us Down, Eh, Birdie?"

"A History-Making Combat Is About To Begin..." relates the story. Zero and Bird-plane battle it out in the heavens while below the crew of an American destroyer watch. Exclaims one officer, "Whatta Match-Look--The Kid's Right On His Tail!!"

Nonetheless, "the kid" is having his troubles. Hirote has gunned Birdie in the tail-section. Airboy mans his own machine guns saying grimly, "This Is A Taste Of What All You Japs Will Get Some Day!" A trick on the part of Hirote and black smoke jets from the Zero's rear section. Believing his bullets have punctured his enemy's gas tank, Airboy closes in through the blinding smoke only to find Hirote waiting for him with "singing lead."

New bullets rip into Birdie's tail assembly, tearing it away. Hirote follows confident of victory. A narrow mountain pass looms ahead. Rolling sideways, the bird-plane maneuvers the narrow space between twin outcroppings of stone. Unable to pull up in time, the pursuing Zero crashes into the mountain peaks and as the story relates, "Exit Hirote, Who Was The Pride Of The Rising Sun..."

Yet new danger faces Airboy. Kritzel has been waiting and watching. His plane closes in "Primed For The Kill." With Birdie badly wrecked and "Clean Out Of Ammunition," Airboy makes the only decision possible--he aims the bird-plane head-on directly at Kritzel. "Closer, Closer--Rush The Two Hornets Of The Heavens--Hot Lead Rips Open The Belly Of Airboy's Plane--Someone Must Give Ground--BUT WHO?!!" Thinks Airboy, "One Chance In A Thousand I'll Come Out Of This--So Long, Birdie, We Had Fun!" Neither pilot gives ground. Both planes meet in a head-on blaze of light and destruction. Two parachutes drift slowly to earth. A man and a boy face one another. The man has a knife; the boy a wounded leg. And:

"Next Month...You Will See AIRBOY'S Grim, Dramatic Battle For Life On A Mountain Slope...You Will See Love, Hate And Sudden Death Sweep Through These Pages. Watch For AIRBOY #3." And Airboy #3 came on equally strong in excitement as the story unfolded in the pages of Air Fighter Comics, Vol. 1, No. 4, January, 1943. It was a tale beginning on a remote California mountain top but promising "DEATH For The Aleutian Invaders! That's The message AIRBOY, The Monarch Of The Skies, Brings To Our Back-Stabbing Foreign Foe--Relentless warfare Until Victory Is Won!!"

But before Airboy could deliver this message, he first had to contend with a knife-weilding Kritzel, who is vowing, "But I'll Live To See AMERICA Conquered-And You Won't!" Hearts beat faster as Airboy dodged Kritzel's knife. And the tenseness was almost unbearable as the villainous Kritzel moved forward snarling, "I'm Coming AIRBOY, And I'll Crack Every Bone In Your Little Body For Humiliating An Agent Of The Reich!" A rumbling landslide! Airboy leaps to safety on an opposite ledge. Kritzel is not so fortunate and is buried beneath tons of cascading rock. Airboy's comment? "Gone! And I Guess It Was A Good End For The Rat! Hope Birdie Isn't Too Ruined!"

Birdie wasn't and Airboy was able to glide her to safer ground.

Birdie was such an integral part of the Airboy series, she is deserving of detailed mention. Humanization of a machine is not unusual. Throughout history ships have been referred to as she. A favorite car takes on the aspect of a companion to its owner. A favored device in the writing of fiction is simply having someone for the hero to "talk to." In the case of Airboy "Something" was a substitute for "some one"

Airboy had no need for a human aerial sidekick. His companion was Birdie and he spoke to her as they flew through the skies on battle missions as if she was a real person. And alone in the heavens as they coursed, boy and plane became confidant and confident to one another. Those who read and thrilled to the Airboy saga do not recall Airboy without in the same instant recalling Birdie. The two were inseperable. Birdie was to Airboy, as a warrior steed was to knights of centuries past.

Mention has been made how Birdie could hover in the air, remain hidden in cloud banks and take off almost straight up if need called for it. She could also be controlled by a tiny electrical unit which in later stories was secreted under Airboy's jacket lapel. In theorizing about Birdie, Ephraim Blood of Ticonderoga, N.Y., a modern-day authority on war and weaponry, opinions:

"My guess would be that 'Birdie' weighs in at 10,000 pounds. That's about what the 'British Hurricane' weighed. My guess is that the two planes were about the same size. To my eye 'Birdie' resembles Leonardo Da Vinci's 'Bat-Glider' design rather than any aircraft current in the late '30's and early '40's. The wings are suggestive of Da Vinci's design, while the fuselage looks like a .50 calibre bullet much enlarged. Of course, wing similarity can be found in comparing 'Birdie' with the German 'Rumpler' of World War I, as well as the French 'Spad' of that era."

In later Airboy stories, Blood points out:

"Yes, 'Birdie' was definitely jet-powered; the wings no longer flapped. Jet air intakes were fashioned in the wing roots and an exhaust outlet at the rear of the fuselage beneath the tail. There were also extra fuel tanks paired into the wings at the point where they hinged."

Birdie's "secrets" were also told within the stories themselves. In the December, 1942 issue of Air Fighters, Airboy explained the workings of the pre-jet Birdie thusly:

"Instead of opening a throttle, I just press this button--the harder I push, the faster the wings flap, and the higher I go!! The tail and wings are built to let me stop in an instant and turn about! Birdie's really a Mechanical Bird--There's Hardly any difference at all!!!" In Air Fighters, January-1943, Airboy told: "Birdie has a rubberized covering--and that periscope on the windshield enables me to see an enemy plane without turning my head--and shoot it down with my tail gun!"

Evidently the "periscope" was soon found to be an unnecessary piece of equipment for it was in this one particular issue alone that it was used or shown as part of the planes fighting devices. Birdie was heavily armed. Besides the aforementioned Tail Gun, fire power was bolstered by twin machine guns on each wing, and heavier machine guns, one mounted on each side of the cockpit so that the pilot had merely to reach out an arm to operate either one. All told the early Bird-plane boasted cannon power of seven guns. A diagram drawing of the bird-plane, shown in the January tale, read: in part:

"The Wing Covering Is A Rubberized Canvas--This Enables The Wing To Telescope Fore To Aft, Giving It Slower Or Faster Landing Speed As Desired." And as Airboy, himself said, "As You Know My Wings Fold Up And I Can Stop Birdie In Midair."

In a demonstration of Birdie's amazing aerial acrobatics, Airboy dove the bird-plane toward a waiting figure on a rooftop. Swooping in gracefully, Birdie "picked up" the man with her wheels, carried him into the sky and then like a winged feather swooped down again releasing the man safely upon the ground.

Just as in Westerns where the top gun fighter is always the target of another anxious to make his own ruputation, Airboy was likewise, the ultimate target of enemy aerial aces. Hirote had failed to down him, Kritzel was no luckier, and it was inevitable there would always be others trying to seize the crown of the sky-ways.

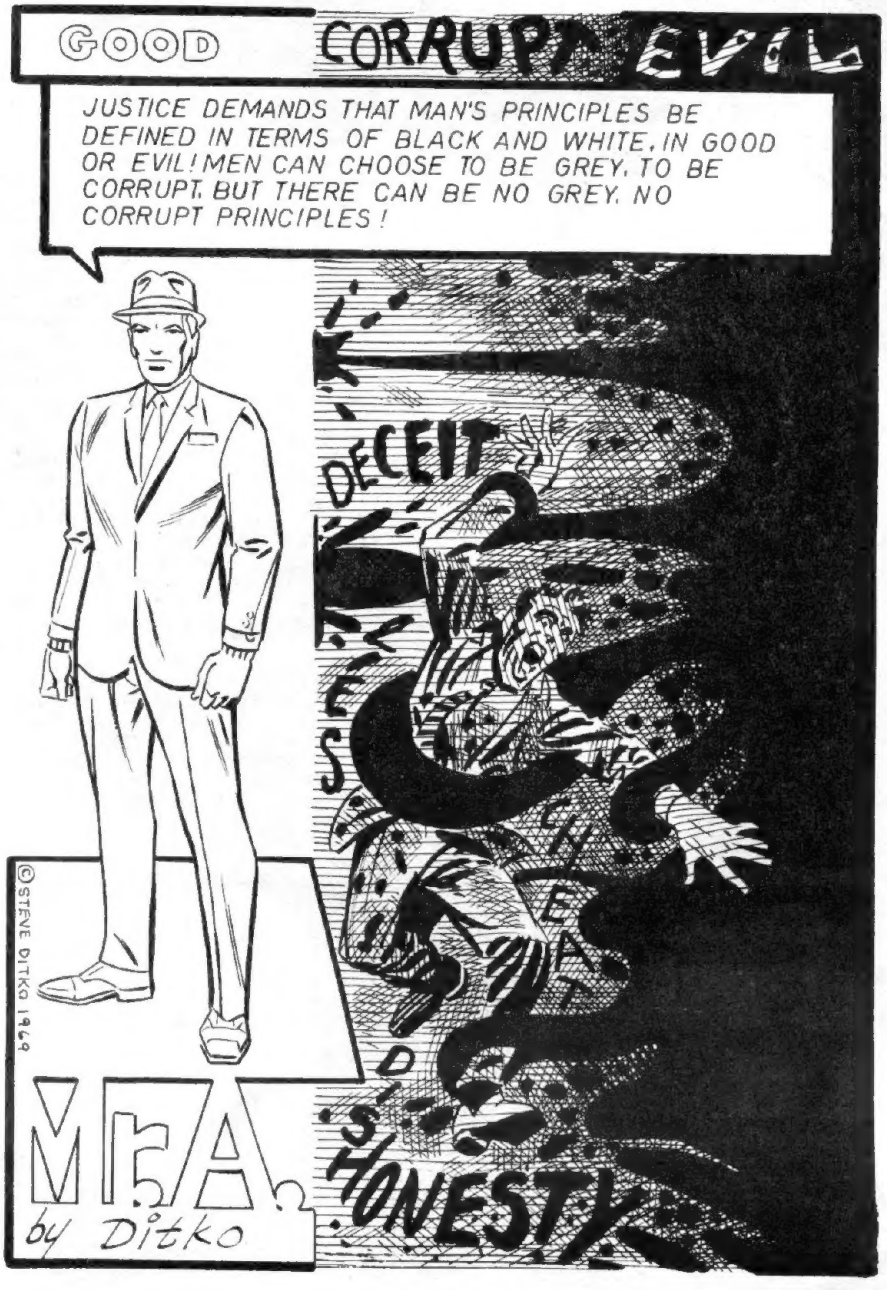
The most formidable of all Airboy's opponents was strangely enough--a woman! Summing up her personality can best be done by quoting a childish rhyme,

"When she was good, she was very, very good, But when she was bad, she was horrid."

Once again it is my honor to present Mr. A by.....

STEVE DITKO

This drawing heralds the big news about next issue. Next issue The Defender strip will be replaced by the begining of a 2-part Mr. A strip by Steve Ditko. This strip is really something different, so don't miss it.


GOOD
CORRUPT
EVIL
JUSTICE DEMANDS THAT MAN'S PRINCIPLES BE DEFINED IN TERMS OF BLACK AND WHITE, IN GOOD OR EVIL! MEN CAN CHOOSE TO BE GREY, TO BE CORRUPT, BUT THERE CAN BE NO GREY, NO CORRUPT PRINCIPLES!
DECEIT
HONESTY
©STEVE DITKO 1969
Mr. A
by Ditko

This was VALKYRIE! A woman alluringly beautiful, taught in the ways of wickedness by the Germans, but born of an inner softness that in a moment could change to hard unyielding vengance.

That Airboy and Valkyrie were attracted to one another is true. But in Valkyrie's shifting personality the seeds of love could and would change radically to streams of hatred. In some stories, it was she who saved Airboy's life, in others she did her best to bring about his death.

The unforgetable first meeting of the boy and the woman took place in Air Fighters Comics, Vol. 2, No.2, November, 1943. The cover of this comic alone promised memorable adventures. "LATEST WAR THRILLS! 10¢" screamed a secondary logo. And for all the world to see Airboy lay streched on a dimly lighted dungeon floor. His arms are manacled with heavy chains. His red jacket has been shredded and torn. Across his bare chest and back are the ugly, vicious scars of the whip. Above him, one hand clenched toward the sky and the other brandishing a deadly looking automatic is VALKYRIE. Her face is triumphant and wild as she sneers, "It's VALKYRIE, AIRBOY--And The AIRMAIDENS Are With Me!!! Not Even SKYWOLF, The Iron Ace, Black Angel Or Flying Dutchman Can Save You Now!"

Inside more of the same and Valkyrie wearing the costume that is to become familiar to a decade of readers. A soft pale green, form-fitting, blouse of satin, equally-tight slacks of pale red, descending into flying boots. A cape with fured collar completes the dress.

Barry Kida is the artist. His skill in drawing the strip adds new heights. The stage is set. The beginning story line goes like this...

"For This Fear Is Not Ugly--It Is BEAUTIFUL--As Beautiful As A Girl Who Calls Herself VALKYRIE! She Is Not Human--Her Heart Is As Black As The Devil's...And Under Her Spell, AIRBOY Faces The Most Terrifying Adventure Of His Career!!"

Immediately action! Nazi ships knifing through the darkness of English skies. An intercepting British squadron cut to ribbons. "Heil Hitler! All For Der Fuehrer!" is the Germanic warcry. Victorious Nazis returning to their air base. The pilots--women, let by Valkyrie. A German official chortling, "Vondebar! Den My AIRMAIDEN Squadron Iss A Success! We Shall Show Der World The Type Of Girlhood Germany Has!"

Valkyrie vowing, "I, Valkyrie, Shall Be The Great Master Of The Air! I Shall Face Airboy As The Cream Of German Youth!--We Shall See How Invincible He Is--Ha!" Her Nazi loyalty? Unquestionable--"My Life Belongs To The Fuehrer! He Is Our Sun!"

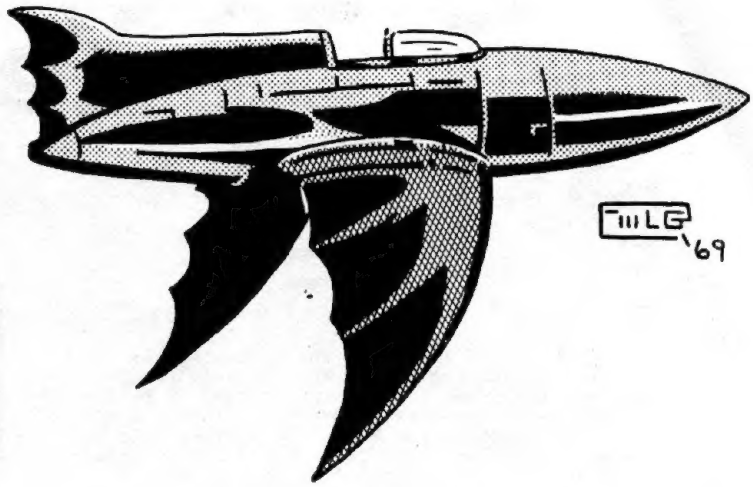
Above the bird-plane. Airboy has followed. A sky battle with Airboy winning only to loose. "I can't bring myself down to shooting a girl!"--a code that proves undoing and Airboy is a prisoner.

Valkyrie still means to prove her superority over Airboy. "I Shall Fly The Bird-Plane Against Airboy." A lashing at the hands of Valkyrie, but Airboy refuses to tell her the secrets of Birdie.

It is doubtful that readers were conscious of flagellation in the whipping scenes that continued for a number of panels. Reports of German atrocities and ill treatment of prisoners was common knowledge then even to the very young. The reader accepted it as fact. Similar scenes had been enacted in American movies and reported in news media.

So the reader continued with the story not bothered by any conscious Freudian overtones. Three Airmaidens, awed by Airboy's bravery, release him from his cell and

AIRBOY and VALKYRIE



hide him. For their disloyalty, a public lashing is ordered.

Valkyrie finds Airboy and tells him what has happened. With a kiss she seals her promise that given the secrets of Airboy she will see to it the Airmaidens are freed without punishment. Airboy agrees.

Now Valkyrie holds the upper hand. In her mind she planned all along to betray Airboy, have his plane for herself, and secure the release of the three Airmaidens all at the same time. But she is to find the German high officer equally as treacherous.

Given Airboy's hiding place, Herr Oberst declares, "They Shall Be Whipped In Front Of The Rest Of The Girls As An Example! We Must Have Discipline At All Costs! And Airboy Shall Be Shot As An EXTRA Attraction!"

An angered Valkyrie, one who with blazing eyes and firmed set mouth, avows, "So! This Is The Master Who Trained Me To Be A Good Nazi! Now I Can See The Evil Of My Tricky Ways! Well, While I Can Still Change, I Will!"

A feminine finger squeezes the trigger of a luger. A Nazi officer slumping in death, his hand clutching at a swastikaed flag hung on the wall. "Death To You! And The Other Nazi Ways Of Life!" is Valkyrie's snarl.

And now a new pilot at the control of the wonderful bird-plane. Below the execution courtyard where stands a defiant boy. Tied to separate posts, the three Airmaidens, about to be flogged. A German officer with hand upraised, thunders, "When I Drop My Hand, Commence! Ten Lashes Each For Der Girls! DEATH For Airboy! Ready!"

The signal never comes. It is lost in the blazing white head of bullets from a bat-winged craft, and Valkyrie's war song of "Die Butchers!" Airmaidens leaping to their planes rallying to Valkyrie's, "We've Been On The Wrong Side! You Saw What They Were Going To Do To Some Of Us--"

Airboy in Birdie with Valkyrie. Taxiing planes machine-gunning German soldiers trying to stop the escape. In the sky new battle, "With Nazi Brother Against Sister, The Fight Is All The More Bitter...But Airboy And The Airmaidens Steadily Grind Their Enemy Out Of The Sky..."

Airboy next met Valkyrie in the April-1944, Vol. 2, No.7, edition of Air Fighters Comics and this time Valkyrie and her Airmaidens were strictly on the side of the Allies, with the Germans plotting to bring about her death. But first a secret weapon must be brought into use against RAF bombing missions.

The weapon--"The Most Powerful Light Beam Ever Made By Man!" And it's first use brings about the death of one of Airboy's closest friends and his entire bombing mission. Airboy, alone, takes off in Birdie along the same route taken by the bombing mission.

Blinding light and Airboy is forced to land. Taken captor he is held prisoner with the survivors of the ill-fated bombing run. Valkyrie and the Airmaidens set out to find Airboy. Their's is a daylight raid to thwart the powerful light beam. Airfighters Comics recorded the takeoff as, "This Time AGAINST THE NAZIS!"

The mission of course was successful. Airboy and the other prisoners are rescued and the German forces defeated in a breath-taking aerial contest to conclude the story. Admiring British pilots comment:

"What A Knock-Out She Is--And She Fights And Flies Like A Demon!" And: "It'll Be A Lucky Bloke That Wins Valkyrie, Says I!" The favored 'lucky bloke' of the moment is none other than--AIRBOY!

NEXT ISSUE:

Learn of Misery....A villian that rivals even the Red Skull.

Thrill, as Tom Fagan relates the most frightening Airboy story of all...

THE INVASION OF THE BATS!

32 Years With.....

Article by:
Bob Cosgrove &
Martin Greim
assisted by
JERRY BAILS

When one thinks of the Golden Age of Comics, it brings to mind many fabulous characters, as well as a host of famous artists--Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, Reed Crandall, Joe Kubert, Lou Fine, just to name a few. However, should one try to recall a famous writer of that period, he is often hard pressed to come up with a name. Oh, there were a few - Joe Simon, Otto Binder, perhaps Bill Finger and Jerry Seigal, but the one name that most fans would remember best is that of GARDNER FOX--a man who has worked in the field for thirty two- odd years.

Although Fox thought he was going to be a lawyer, and even went to law school, fate knew otherwise. Even in his high-school days, Fox did dialogue and captions for a schoolmate buddy with cartoonist ambitions. Fox's first published story came about as an accident--while sick in bed with the flu, he wrote to pass the time, only to find that his work was published by Gold Medal. From there, it was only a short jump into the comics field, under the editorship of Vince Eldon, at the company destined to become famous as Superman-DC. His early works included such crime-adventure tales as Speed Saunders (an ace detective), Three Aces, Radio Squad, Cotton Carver (a Jungle Jim type character), an occasional Batman, and his first "brainchild" Steve Malone!

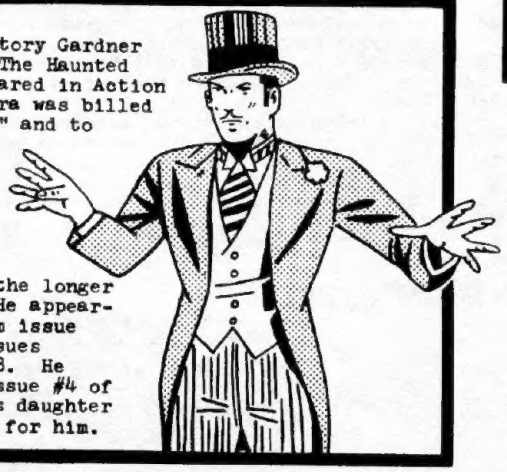
STEVE MALONE

The first Steve Malone story, "The Murdered Ambassador", was written March 20, 1938 for Dectective Comics. Malone was a District Attorney and his stories were typical of the action shoot-em-up kind prevalent in the pre-World War II era. He was tough and a crack shot with a gun. In those days (pre-comics code) there were no quams about shooting to kill or beating the daylights out of a bad guy. Fox's Malone stories, by today's standards, would seem a bit trite. You know, Good is better than Evil because it's nicer. However, one must remember, shooting in the streets and crime were front page stories in those days. It was quite often that the papers carried stories of someone being taken for a ride, or a daring bank robbery, so it was only natural for the comics to create crime busting heroes like Malone.

On or about April 1, 1938, Gardner Fox began writing a story about a magician. A magician that would set the pace for many others of his kind to follow. This magician was known as Zatara!

ZATARA

The first Zatara story Gardner Fox wrote was called, "The Haunted Farm". This story appeared in Action Comics #2 - 1938. Zatara was billed as "The Master Magician" and to work his magic he used a gimmic that was imitated by many others of his kind. When he used magic, he spoke what he wanted done - backwards.



Zatara was one of the longer running super heroes. He appeared in Action Comics from issue #1 to 132 and in two issues after that - 136 and 138. He was revived by Fox in issue #4 of Hawkman Comics, when his daughter Zatanna began to search for him.

From mystics to mystery: Gardner Fox, on April 17, 1939, wrote "Theft at the World's Fair" and launched the career of Sandman!

SANDMAN

The early Sandman wore no costume. He was a man of mystery. Clad in cloak and helmet, gas gun gripped in his strong right hand, he fought crime by knocking his foes unconscious with gas. The Sandman was wanted by the police, even though he never committed a crime. This was perhaps due to the gas-mask he wore to protect himself from his gas gun's fumes. His alter ego was Wesley Dodds, a rich playboy. However, when crime was committed, he became the dreaded Sandman!

Sandman appeared in Adventure Comics #40 thru 102, but with issue #69 his costume was changed to a tight fitting super hero one. Gone were the gas-mask and the gas gun and also his aura of mystery.

Besides using his gas gun, in issue #61 a weapon called the wirepoon gun was introduced. This gun fired a barbed shaft, with a line attached, and enabled Sandman to swing around much like Spiderman. Though the early Sandman had been replaced by Simon & Kirby's super hero one, when Fox revived Sandman in issue #46 of Justice League of America, it was the Sandman with the gas-mask he brought back. Only this time, for a weapon, he used a strange gun that turned molecules of sand, that he would toss, into anything that is derived from sand. (Such as glass, cement, etc.) So the revived version of Sandman actually used sand to fit his name.

One of Fox's lesser known heroes was a character called Captain X of the H.A.F.

CAPTAIN X of the R.A.F.

Captain X was in reality Buck Dare, an American reporter based in London, England. He fought along side England's R.A.F. during World War II. At a sheltered hillside, near Croyden Airport, Captain X's hidden underground chamber was located. Here, his plastic airplane, Jenny, was kept in order by his joke telling assistant - Stuffy. Captain X's plane was equipped with eight machine guns and a vibrating ray, which allowed the craft to hover. Captain X appeared in only a few issues of Star Spangled Comics (1 thru 7) so is not as well known as many early DC heroes.

From the time Gardner Fox began writing, many of his stories were based on the events of the day. In the case of the above mentioned Captain X, Fox had him fighting the Nazis before America got into the war. You might call Captain X an English costumed hero. Fox worked with many artists, in his early days. Craig Flessel, Mort Meskin, Sheldon Moldoff, Everett Hibbard and Joe Kubert, just to name a few. Some of these artists conveyed Fox's stories with brilliance, others did not.

Not all of Gardner's time was devoted to writing. He had a few hobbies too. He makes and collects miniature soldiers, (an old hobby of MLG's too, by the way.) specializing in ancient and medieval figures. He's also made a study of old weapons and all phases of history and archeology. This, of course, aides him in his writing.

As the popularity of costumed heroes increased, Gardner Fox worked on more super powered heroes. Heroes such as the stellar powered hero Starman!

Gardner Fox

Art for Gardner Fox picture adapted from SHOWCASE #35.

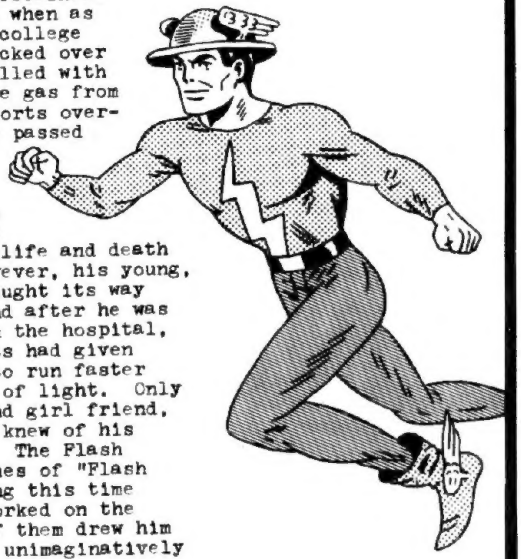
1940 was a great year for super heroes. Fox, teamed with the artistic talents of Everett Hibbard, created one of the most popular heroes of the day - The Flash. The Flash appeared in a comic bearing his own name "Flash Comics", but it could just as easily have been titled Fox Comics, for Gardner Fox wrote most of the magazine's stories. Besides the Flash, Fox wrote King Standish, (a hero in a top hat, mask and tux, who was a master of disguise.) Cliff Cornwal and fan favorite, for many years - Hawkman. Fox's creation proved so popular that the Flash received his own magazine "All Flash" in the summer of 1941.

STARMAN

Adventure Comics #61 (April, 1941). Ted knight, wealthy playboy, made a remarkable discovery. He found a way to use infra-rays from distant stars. Using these rays, in a device he called a gravity rod, he overcame the forces of gravity and launched bolts of energy. After perfecting his gravity rod, he devised a red and green costume and became known as the star-powered hero Starman!

Early art was by Jack Burnley and Mort Meskin and for the art of this time, it was a step higher than most. Fox's villains were some of the best too. In issue #67 of Adventure Comics, The Mist made his first appearance. He was a character who, by using an inviso-solution, made objects coated with it disappear. He also wore a cloak that created the illusion of turning his body to mist. When Fox brought Starman back in issue #29 of the JLA he increased the powers of his gravity rod. Now, he had the rod drawing its increased power from the cosmic forces of the universe. His rod was now called the "cosmic rod".

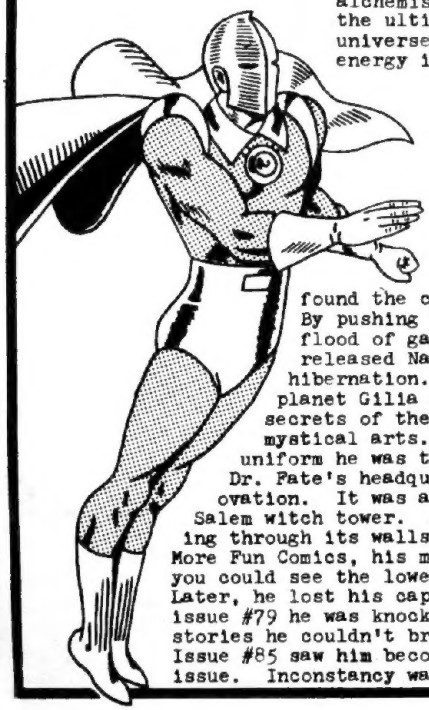
THE FLASH



The Flash obtained his super speed when as Jay Garrick, a college student, he knocked over some retorts filled with hard water. The gas from the smashed retorts overcame him and he passed out. He was discovered the next morning and rushed to a hospital, where he lay between life and death for weeks. However, his young, healthy body fought its way back to life and after he was discharged from the hospital, he found the gas had given him the power to run faster than the speed of light. Only his lab aide and girl friend, Joan Williams, knew of his dual identity. The Flash lasted 104 issues of "Flash Comics". During this time many artists worked on the strip. Some of them drew him so crudely and unimaginatively that Fox's fabulous hero lost many readers. However, the art did get better. Joe Kubert illustrated an ocassional story, as well as Carmine Infantino and Alex Toth. Fox's genius created some memorable Flash villians too. The Turtle, Ragdoll, The Thorn, and The Fiddler, just to name a few. It is a shame the art didn't always match the story.

In More Fun Comics, Gardner Fox wrote stories for perhaps the most colorful and confusing mystic of the Golden Age - Dr. Fate. I say confusing because, of all the early DC heroes, Dr. Fate had more changes in costume and story than any other.

DR. FATE



Dr. Fate, being both an alchemist and a mage, learned the ultimate secret of the universe, the conversion of energy into matter and matter into energy. He had two origins. The first being, that he was 1,000,000 years old and placed on Earth by elder gods, long before the time of man. His second origin told of how Kent Nelson, son of an archeologist, found the casket of Nabu the Wise. By pushing a lever, he sent a flood of gas into the casket and released Nabu from a state of hibernation. Nabu was from the planet Gilia and he tought Kent the secrets of the universe and lost mystical arts. He also gave him a uniform he was to wear as Dr. Fate. Dr. Fate's headquarters was a comic innovation. It was a doorless, windowless, Salem witch tower. He entered it, by walking through its walls. In issue #72 of More Fun Comics, his mask was modified so you could see the lower half of his face. Later, he lost his cape and epaulets. In issue #79 he was knocked out and in later stories he couldn't break his bonds or fly. Issue #85 saw him become a doctor in one issue. Inconstancy was his by-word.

As far as fandom is concerned, such favorites as The Flash and Green Lantern might be okay, but their real hero was Hawkman. It was Hawkman that had the older fans screaming "REVIVAL"--Hawkman that they oohed and ahhed over after his appearance in Brave and Bold--Hawkman they fought for until, through the goodness of DC editor Julie Schwarts, he was granted his own magazine. Why? What charm did this character possess?

HAWKMAN

Hawkman, or simply the Hawk, as he was called in the forties, possessed a certain natural charm. Who WOULDN'T want to be able to soar thru the air like an eagle? And wasn't it a bit more believable to fly with your own strength and an imposing set of wings, than to float thru the sky, Superman like, in blatant defiance of the laws of gravity? Not only that, but Fox imbued him with a certain uniqueness. Sure, he was Carter

Hall, a wealthy Bruce Wayne imitation, but more importantly, he was the reincarnation of a former Egyptian warrior who had fought evil in the time of the Pharoahs, who flew thru the skys with the aid of the anti-gravity "ninth metal". At this time, when only the Fawcett line provided a bit of relief from the well-nigh perfect speciman of manhood who stepped into a laboratory and came out a superman, this re-incarnated hero who battled crime with weapons of the past was a welcome relief. Somehow, Fox had created Hawkman with perhaps a bit more love than with his other characters, and it showed, thruout his entire life.

Fox once told the following story about the creation of Hawkman. One day, while trying to dream up a new super hero, Fox chanced to look out a window and observed a bird collecting twigs for its nest. The bird would swoop down, pick up a twig, then fly away. Fox thought to himself, "Wouldn't it be great if that bird was a lawman and the twig a crook." So as simply as that, a legendary hero was born. This story is a prime example of the tremendous imagination of this writer.

When Fox revived Hawkman, in Brave and Bold #34, depressingly, he was not reincarnated, but merely another visitor from space. So original was Fox's handling of this old concept, however, that it took on a fresh look--new angles were added. Hawkman was married, and in his civillian identity, harrassed by a pretty museum worker who would have liked nothing better than to break up his marriage. Sadly, when Murphy Anderson took over the art, Fox's imagination seemed to fail. Mavis Trent, Hawkgirl's rival, was forgotten, and stories took on a depressingly gimmicky-over- plotted outlook. It was a shame, really. Hawkman was Fox's best.

Not all of Gardner Fox's work was for DC. Beginning in January, 1940, under the pen name of Michael Blake, he began writing the first of 21 adventures for the Columbia Comic Corp. These adventures were about a most unusual hero called - The Face!

THE FACE

The Face was in reality Tony Trent, a radio announcer and news correspondent. After witnessing a murder, by two men in police uniforms, he decided to have a special mask made for himself, at a mask shop. A grotesque green faced mask that fitted over his head, yet so thin and flexible that it could easily be rolled up to a small pocket size, was the end result. Tony was going to use this mask to frighten criminals and to fight crime. While he was trying the mask on, the two men who had committed the murder he had seen earlier, came in. It seems they had rented police uniforms, to disguise themselves, and were now returning to kill the costume shop owner. The Face appeared before the criminals, paralyzed them with fright and immediately put them out of commission. However, just as the police arrived, the shop owner was killed by a mysterious hooded figure. Inspector Biggs blames The Face and markes him as the murderer. Throughout The Face's career, Biggs was always after him.

In many Face stories the emphasis was on the Face's mask, but in later stories the only time the Face was seen was in flashback sequences. The action now focused on Tony Trent. The Face had some fabulous art by Mart Baily and story wise some of the best ever written. The stories were written on a more mature level and way ahead of their time.

From time to time Fox would try his hand at a weird tale or science-fiction story for pulp magazines. He found that this change of pace kept him from going stale. In the early 1950's he did his first paperback book, a historical novel called "The Borgia Blade". Fox has had over thirty novels published, some under his own name (like "Warrior of Llarn"), some under his six pen names.

May of 1940 saw Gardner Fox, under the editorship of Vincent Sullivan and teamed with the artistic talents of Ogden Whitney, turn out the leading character in the Columbia Comics line....Skyman!

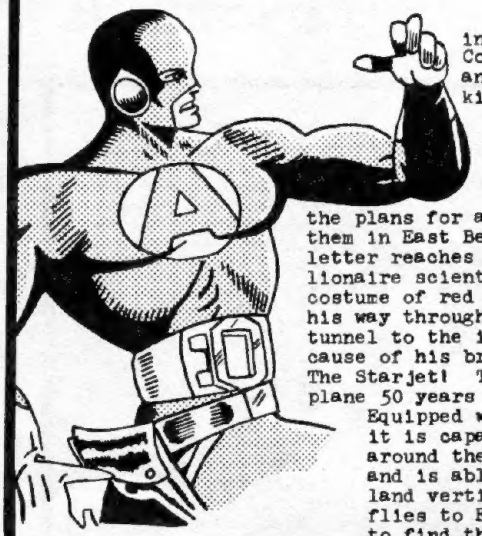
SKYMAN

Fox, under the pen name of Paul Dean, was Skyman's first writer. He wrote 24 stories and helped develop the character. Skyman was Allen Turner, whose parents were killed in an airplane accident, in his early teens. Allen was taken in by his uncle, Peter Turner, a great scientist, who explained his parents death was caused by faulty material used in his father's plane. Year after year, Allen worked with America's greatest brain, until he too became great. It was at this point Allen decided to become a scientist-policeman and use his genius to overcome evil. He had been left with a fortune and after graduating from Harnel College, where he had been an all-around athlete, he assumed a Bruce Wayne type of identity.

Skyman's greatest invention was The Wing, a huge red, white and blue aircraft that was shaped like a boomarang. The Wing utilized the power of the north and south pole magnetic fields. These fields kept The Wing stationary whenever Skyman wanted to leave the plane. This craft was equiped with the same type of crossbar devise that the Ditko Blue Beetle used to leave his bug craft. Skyman was finally discontinued in issue #102, but while he flew high his stories were presented in an adult style.

Fox also worked on some western characters...Tim Holt and Straight Arrow. These characters were put out by a company called ME (the same people who published the original Ghost Rider). Six years after Skyman was discontinued Gardner Fox created a hero copied after him...The Avenger!

THE AVENGER



The Avenger came into being when Colonel Ralph Wright and his wife were kidnapped and forced to go to East Berlin. The Reds forced the Colonel to write his brother, Roger, and tell him to deliver the plans for a new airplane to them in East Berlin. When the letter reaches Roger Wright, millionaire scientist, he dons a costume of red and white and makes his way through an underground tunnel to the item that is the cause of his brothers kidnaping... The Starjet! The Starjet is a plane 50 years ahead of its time. Equipped with an atomic motor, it is capable of flying around the world endlessly and is able to take off and land vertically. The Avenger flies to East Berlin, only to find that his brother and his wife have already been murdered. He foils the red leaders attempt to get the plans for the Starjet which causes the red leader to be killed by his superiors. His brother avenged, Ralph Wright vows to prevent crime and oppression as The Avenger!

While Fox worked for ME he wrote nearly every story they published. This was primarily because his life long friend Vincent Sullivan was ME's editor.

After the "black friday" of the comic book, when the super-hero seemed gone for good, the comics switched to horror, and, after the code came in, science fiction. Fox did some nice work in this period, but DC plots, hampered by the code, too often revolved around some sort of gimmick,

and in NO case came thru with the sock ending and moral of the EC comics. Likewise, the art, adequete as it was, was hopelessly outclassed by EC's pre-code work. Throughout this time Fox was writing more paperbacks, even as he does today. The same holds true of them, tho' they are more enjoyable than the comic work - good adventure and excitement, not profound meaning.

Adam Strange

Ironically, this s-f trend led, in 1958, to the creation of the s-f hero, ADAM STRANGE , who travelled from Earth to the planet Rann to fight the threats to this adopted planet. At first by Mike Sekowsky but soon by Carmine Infantino, Strange fast became the s-f hero pars excellance. What Flash Gordon was to the newspaper, Strange was to the comic book. Like Flash, Strange's adventures revealled a whole culture, a civilization. Like Flash, Strange was superbly illustrated, although not quite as well. Strange enjoyed the inks of Murphy Anderson, unquestionably the best inker DC enjoyed, with the possible exception of Wally Wood, and voted many times the best inker in comic books.

By the time Strange faded into limbo, super-heroes and Marvel Comics were IN, and Fox was churning out fine stories for many of them. There was Batman, by Infantino; the Atom, another revamped revival, by Gil Kane, the Justice League, by Sekowsky, and an occasional Green Lantern, also by the talented Gil Kane. Most of all however, there was The Flash, respected by fans and competitors as one of the finest mags on the stands. John Broome wrote many tales, but the ones Fox wrote were among the scarlet speedster's very best. One Alley Award Winner was entitled "Flash of Two Worlds." This story told of how The Flash accidently vibrated himself through a dimensional barrier into the world of the Golden Age Flash. This event was explained thusly: "Two objects can occupy the same space and time if they vibrate at different speeds. Obviously, both earths developed similar customs and heroes". The present day Flash learned of the other one because he had read of him, as a fictional character, in a magazine called "Flash Comics". It was explained that Gardner Fox had written about the Golden Age Flash after his adventures had come to him in his dreams. When Fox went to sleep, his mind became "Tuned In" on the vibratory earth. This Earth 1 and Earth 2 idea, as it was called, was a stroke of genius on Fox's part, for it left the door open for future Golden Age - present day adventures between super-heroes.

To wind up this Gardner Fox feature, no two magazines are more worthy of discussion than All Star Comics - Justice Society of America and todays Justice League of America.

J.S.A. - J.L.A.

The Flash

Hawkman

Superman

Batman

While the enthusiastic majority might have acclaimed Hawkman king, in the Golden Age, many favored other Fox-scripted characters: The Flash--Starman--Dr. Fate--The Sandman. What matter? One could find all his favorites in All Star Comics, where the world's most colorful heroes had banded together to fight crime and injustice as...**THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA!** The Justice Society, the very name struck terror into the hearts of criminals, for at one time or another, Superman, Batman, Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Spectre, Atom, Sandman, Dr. Fate, Hourman, Starman, Dr. Mid-Nite, Wonder Woman, Wildcat, Mr. Terrific, Red Tornado, Johnny Thunder and the beautiful Black Canary battled their way across the pages of All Star. No less impressive were the artists that graced these pages--Kubert, Toth, Infantino, Kirby--All Star had them all, and far too many lesser lights as well.

Green Lantern

The Flash

The Idea of the Justice Society of America was conceived and developed in 1940 by three men...M. C. Gaines, publisher and managing editor; Sheldon Mayer, editor; and Gardner F. Fox, writer. Fox wrote the first Justice Society story in All Star Comics #3 and everyone following-up until issue #38. His basic pattern in these storys, was to have each member individually featured in different chapters, coming together as a team only in the introduction and conclusion. In most cases, each chapter was drawn by a different artist. In issue #38 Fox introduced a more flexible format. The members were now featured in two or three man teams and only occasionally soloed.

The Atom

Green Lantern

In the March, 1960 issue of Brave and the Bold (#28), Fox and his cohorts attempted to recapture the bygone glory of the JSA. In some cases, he was successful. The early Brave and Bold stories, some of the first JLA epics in their own magazine, and a few of the JSA-JLA teamups, made possible by the introduction of "Earth Two" in the Flash series, ranked as examples of Fox at his best. But Sekowsky's early fine art was beginning a rapid decline, even with the third JLA story, "The Case of the Stolen Super Powers." Hampered by lack of space and an ever increasing mob of super-heroes, Fox seemed to go stale. Some of the stories rank as the poorest put out by DC in the era. The fault was most certainly not Fox's, but it is true nonetheless.

Dr. Mid-Nite

Aquaman

Begining with issue #25 of the Justice League of America, the powers-to-be at DC realized the JLA was too overcrowded to write good stories for and began featuring fewer members. Fox, once again, began turning out great material. To what heights this fine author will soar in the future are uncertain, but you can be sure of one thing: As long as fandom exists, the name Gardner Fox will be spoken of with respect and admiration.

Johnny Thunder

Wonder Woman

J'onn J'onzz

Wonder Woman

Layouts by:
Bob Cosgrove

Art by:
Martin L. Greim
Ronn Foss

Empress of Mongo

Art and Article
by
Martin L. Greim

Ming and Sonja

MLG '69

(Copyright... King Features)

For a short time, in the reign of Ming the Merciless, he had an Empress rule at his side. This all came about, when Ming and a party of his elite guards were burying a contender to his throne on Mongo's Island of Tombs. As Ming and his guards returned to the royal barge, they were attacked by Flash Gordon and his freemen, who were taking refuge on the island. After a fierce battle Flash overcame Ming and took him prisoner. Now, at last, Mongo had a chance to be free. Ming was put in a cell, while Flash met with his generals to make terms for freeing Mongo.

While back at Ming's cell a traitorous girl named Sonja had wormed her way past Ming's guard to give Ming a proposition. "I hate Flash Gordon!" Sonja told Ming. "If you make me your Empress, I'll help you escape." Ming agreed and seconds later Sonja had knifed Ming's guard and freed him. Ming and Sonja then made good their escape on a launch and returned to Mingo City. Flash Gordon and his men, after finding that Ming had escaped, quickly left their island hide out. Flash knew it would only be a short time before Ming's army would be sent against them.

Meanwhile true to his word, Ming rewarded Sonja's treachery by marrying her and crowning her Empress of all Mongo. Ming then rose from his throne and gave a command. "I've kept my promise to make her Empress. Now take the rebel girl to the dungeons and execute her at once!" And so, such was the reward for the treacherous "Empress of Mongo". The ceremony was over. Ming strode down echoing hallways to his study. The great palace chimes started a mournful tolling. "Ha, the bells!" A sneer twisted on Ming's lips. "The Empress is dead! Would it were Flash Gordon instead!"

WILDCAT AND MR. TERRIFIC

(Copyright National Per. Pub.)

MLG '69

THE DAYS OF THE J.S.A.
#1

by

John Lawrence

Wildcat, was in reality, Ted Grant, a heavyweight fighter. Wildcat came into being, when Ted Grant was wrongly accused of murdering the heavyweight champ by means of a needle placed in his glove. Actually the needle had been placed there by his manager. Ted escaped the police when the squad car he was being taken away in was wrecked. Being a fugitive, he adopted a "Wildcat" costume and went after his former manager and soon brought him to justice. Ted then decided to keep his "Wildcat" identity and fight crime and injustice.

Wildcat's connection with the Justice Society of America was a minor one. In "All Star Comics" #24 he was an invited guest; helping the JSA prove to a young American (Dick Amber) the warlike ways of Germany. Green Lantern and The Flash became active members again, in this issue, so Wildcat never made it as a permanent member. However, in issue #27 of "All Star Comics", he returned again. This time he took The Atom's place (for this issue only) as the JSA enlisted handicapped youngsters in their fight against crime. In this story, Wildcat enlisted the help of a deaf boy, who could read lips, to find out what a gang of criminals were up to. With the youngsters help, he soon cleaned the gang up. Wildcat never appeared with the JSA again, until issue #46 of The Justice League of America, when the Justice Society teamed up with the Justice League.

Mr. Terrific, in reality, was Terry Sloan a financial wizard. His origin, though a dull one, is as follows. Terry Sloan was quite a remarkable boy. When he was born, it was obvious that he had exceptional talent. His mind and body were advanced far beyond those of the other children of his age. He became a child prodigy at the age of 10. As he grew older, he discovered that there was no art, science, or sport that he wasn't an expert at. He decided to use his talents to fight crime and after designing a costume, became Mr. Terrific.

Mr. Terrific's connection with The Justice Society was even less than Wildcat's. He appeared only in "All Star Comics" #24 (the same issue as Wildcat) to prove to Dick Amber Germany's war-like tendancies. He, as well as the rest of the JSA, did this by going back in time - aided by a fairy named Conscience.

Until issue #37 of The Justice League of America, he never appeared with the JSA again.

Perhaps the reason for both Wildcat and Mr. Terrific appearing when they did is; at this time many heroes were being dropped and since both of the stories they appeared in were released out of sequence (DC for some reason, released patriotic and moral stories before their due date) perhaps DC was seriously thinking of including them as regular members.

(*Ed.Note...Both Wildcat and Mr. Terrific appeared in their own stories, in Sensation Comics.

FAIR PLAY
WILDCAT

FANDOM'S FINEST

Art & Article
by
BOB COSGROVE

(Featuring - Xal-Kor, the Human Cat)

Personal involvement often means the difference between greatness and mediocrity. Martin Greim and myself are personally involved with our characters, Space Guardian and The Defender. Our own involvement makes us enjoy them more than any other characters. We like to think that our involvement and enjoyment shows up in the final product. In Fandom, there is too much reliance on the pro way of doing things and not enough on creativity. I'm not knocking professionalism, but simply saying that the most professional job is worth little if it is a simple rewrite of pro efforts. One fan who consistantly comes up with a storyline as interesting as any pro comic is Grass Green, writer-artist of Xal-Kor, the Human Cat.

Xal-Kor is a cat-man of superhuman strength and intelligence. The lone emissary of the planet Felis, the fantastic feline has traveled from the fourth dimension into the third, landing on earth to stave off the Rodentite menace. Although Earth people are alarmed at the very sight of him, he has embarked upon the task of "trying to find and counter any menacing, retaliatory operations the rat people might contrive in their un-ending pursuit of total dimensional-universal DOMINATION!" For, if earth is enslaved and all the people are forced to fight in the Rodentite ARMY, Felis and all the other planets of Universe VI in the 4th dimension would fall prey to the overwhelming odds, as the rat people would have utter, complete SURPRISE on their side!!"

To aid him in this awesome task, our hero has taken the guise (aided and abbeted by metamorphic powers) of one Colin Chambers, photographer for the Linton Daily news. Unbeknownst to him, his secretary, Ann Rhoden, is in reality his arch-foe, RODA, Queen of the Rodentites. After his origin in SSC #5, the intrepid Xal-Kor took time out to battle one Z.Z. Grogan in SSC #7. With SSC #8, Xal-Kor highlighted a beautifully drawn cover by Richard Green. On the inside of the magazine, he encountered "Operation Big Move," and managed to foil a Rodentite attempt to return in force to Universe VI, as well as to escape from the clutches of Queen Roda.

In issue #9, Colin's editor, Ed Haines, chanced across the menace of the Rodentite movement. When Haines revealed the menace to the skeptical public, he found himself marked for death...'till Colin, in his Feline Alter-Ego, came to the rescue.

Irony was the password for "Xal-Kor to the Rescue," SSC #10's Green epic. A group of communists decided to capture the catman and brainwash him into becoming a drugged servant of the reds. Knowing that Colin Chambers had been present at most of the Human Cat's appearances, and unable to directly obtain him for bait, they first procured ANOTHER hostage. One Ann Rhoden. Tho' both Catman and Ratwoman saw plenty of action, each remained unaware of the others identity.

In the latest Xal-Kor epic, a booklengther, Xal-Kor clashed with "The Invincible Vole," a rat agent given super powers with the aid of a stolen invention. Fortunatly, the inventor, Ozane Hawe, used a duplicate machine on Xal-Kor.

In his battles, Xal-Kor relies on his wits, strength, feline abilities, metamorphic powers, and his 5-D belt, which, although limited in power, enables him to fly and walk thru walls.

Throughout his short career, Xal-Kor's stories have emphasized sound plot and characterization, as well as a bit of humor. Although Greene, one of FANDOM'S FINEST artists, still needs work on his inking and perspective, Xal-Kor is nonetheless one of the best drawn strips in fandom. Under the capable brush of Landon Chesney, Greene's pencils in issue number twelve of SSC took on an eerie quality. Truly, Xal-Kor represents an example of what fandom's finer talents can do when they try.

EDITORS NOTE:

Xal-Kor, the Human Cat, appears in, what this publication would deem, fandom's number one ama-hero zine. This zine is worth any fan's money and we highly recomend that you buy:

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The DEFENDER

MLG '69

LEGEND

A strange girl appears in a bolt of energy while The Defender is battling a pair of assassins sent by The Ruler to kill him.

She says she has a message for The Defender but is shot before she can deliver it. Now, as a storm begins, The Defender flies her to his apartment.

As the storm rages, The Defender is momentarily lost in thought. Thoughts of...

No. 1 - President of Earth in the year 3961, who ordered The Defender back in time to defeat The Ruler.
Gen. Westman - U.S. General who believes The Defender to be an alien.
Space Guardian - Earth super-hero who knows The Defender isn't an alien.
The Ruler - Evil conquerer of 7 planets, whose barbarism is causing a mind regression in 3961.
The strange girl, who says she has a message from the stars.

The most important thing I must remember, is to let no one know I'm from the future.
For if that be known, people might try to gain foresight into their lives...AND NO MAN SOULD KNOW HIS FUTURE!
The room is suddenly alive with power!
You are doomed David Manning!
Boy, is this costume ever affective! Everybody knows my identity. Now suppose you....
DROP THAT WEAPON!
With amazing power, the Defender is knocked away.
You are a fool. I am Brawn...
and I have twice the power of any man of Earth.
Gee Bronsie, I'm sooo glad you told me that.
The Defender densifies his molecules.
No, Brawn. Stop!
The girl distracts the Defender long enough for Brawn to retrieve his weapon and fire it.
ZAP!
To Be Continued...

history's
Heroes #5.

EC's WONDER WOMAN

Art and Article
by
Martin L. Greim

If you are familiar with the world of comics at all, you are probably aware that EC was a comic line noted for its realism and terrific art. What you may not be aware of, however, is that this line did have one costumed hero book. Moon Girl and The Prince. That's right, Moon Girl was an EC character. Moon Girl, it has been said, was an outright copy of D.C.'s Wonder Woman and to a certain extent she was. However, I believe she was a better written and a more believable character than D.C.'s amazon ever was. Moon Girl's origin appeared in, of all things, a funny animal book. Animal Fables #7. The story was laid out in much the same way Wonder Woman's was. (A story Around spot illos.) The only differance being, her source of power and a slightly altered plot.

The story opened in the mountains of Samarkand. There, Princess Moon Girl, known for her superhuman strength, speed and endurance, was confronted by a suitor. Prince Mengu, a true son of Hercules, had come to ask for her hand in marriage. Moon Girl beseeched her mother, the Queen of Samarkand, not to let the marriage take place. The Queen Mother then told her daughter of an ancient contest, carried down from the days of Marco Polo. A tradition that must be satisfied, before a marriage cermony could take place.

She told of how, during the 13th century, the daughter of the very first Princess of the Moon, not wishing to marry a man weaker than herself, arranged a contest of strength with her suitors. However, the Princess of the Moon was as strong as she was beautiful and no man was her equal. One day, though, a man of princely bearing came and she feel in love with him, but her pride would not permit her to yield to a man less strong than herself. He was stronger than any man she ever met, yet, after a desperate struggle, she defeated him and the young man rode away - bitter with despair. The princess was left sad and lonely. Soon afterward her country was involved in a series of battles. Durring one of these battles, the princess slew an evil wizard and took from him a magic moonstone talisman that made her invincible to harm and multiplied her strength tremendously. The princess was still sad, 'till one day she spied her love, in the midst of battle. Dashing forward, she snatched him from his horse and returned with him to her people. The Princess of the Moon had found her true love.

After telling Moon Girl this tale, The Queen gave her the magic moonstone. All she had to do was touch it and tremendous powers would be hers. (It was later told, the stone glowed red when danger was nearby.) From that day on, Moon Girl always wore the moonstone at her throat.

The contest between Moon Girl and Prince Mengu was a mighty one, but in the end Moon Girl was the victor. And like her ancestor, she was saddened when the Prince rode away. Realizing she had made a mistake, Moon Girl decided to find him and win him back. She finally discovered him in America, where under the name of Lionel Manning, he was an athletic coach in a college. They were united at last; but both loving their adopted country, they decided to stay and dedicate themselves to fighting evil.

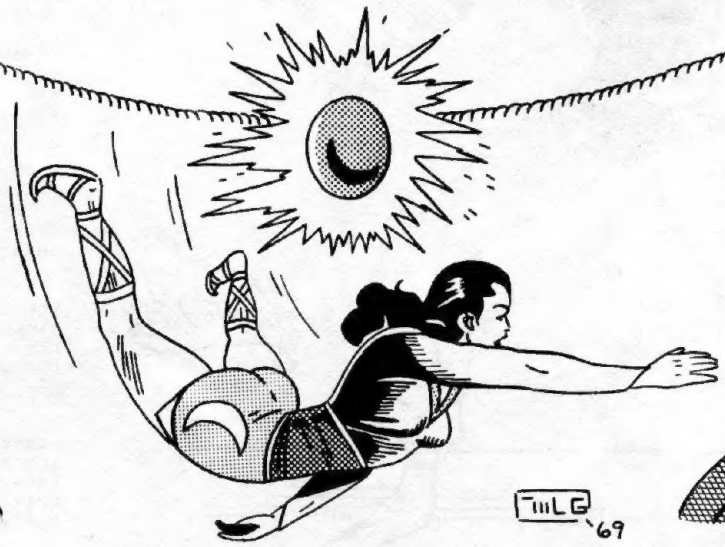
Moon Girl

The Prince

Moon Girl took the name Clare Lune and became a teacher at the same college as The Prince. Soon after, she locked in battle against Satana, one of her most evil foes. Satana dressed in a green outfit and a hooded cape with horns on it. She was an apt foe for the maid of the moon. With each encounter, it took all of Moon Girl's powers to defeat her.

Moon Girl, as a character, was better done than Wonder Woman. Though simmilar, she used the magic of her moonstone for powers; and rather than a Steve Trevor, always chasing after her, she had The Prince as an ally. It is too bad today, when even Wonder Woman is no longer super, that Moon Girl couldn't be revived. Comic magazines are sorely in need of a good super heroine, in its second heroic age.

The Queen Mother



Satana

TMLG '69

COMIC CHATTER

Well, here we are at the close of another issue. And, once again, it's time to relate any comic news I've come across.

Item

Recently, while in a magazine store, I came upon a coloring book. Now hang in there, I haven't gone bye-bye. This book has work by Neal Adams, Milton Caniff, Leonard Starr, and Al Capp, just to name a few. The book is called "Parade of the Comics" and features a parade of America's favorite newspaper cartoon characters. The art was especially drawn for the book. It's put out by The Saalfield Pub. Co. of New York (address unknown). Keep an eye out for this coloring book. It's a real buy for 29¢.

Item

Did you know, that in the town of Winthrop, Mass., the man who was the model for the face and physique of Jerry Siegel's work on Superman resides. His name is Mayo J. Koan and he operates a health spa. Koan posed as Superman for Savings Bond drives during World War II, and looked amazingly like the early Siegel and Shuster creation.

Item

How many of you regular readers noticed the sneaky way I inserted Jim Steranko's name in last issues Defender strip? In the lower left panel of the second page, the one where the girl is appearing - check the name on the pipe railing. The Steranko Pipe Co. Lets stay awake out there fans.

Speaking of Jim Steranko - Did you know there is a Dell paperback out called "Bullet Proof" by Frank Kane and that it has for a cover a Jim Steranko swipe by Tony Destefano. The swipe is taken from S.H.I.E.L.D. #2 and is the panel where the actress is saying to the male lead, "White God...Monster loose...save village...come quick", and he replies that if her delivery gets any worse, he's going to let the village get stomped. The swipe is an exact one, except the figure positions are reversed and the coloring is different.

Jim is also working on the cover design for two new Marvel books. These books are called "Tower of Fear" and "The Castle of Fear". These books will be like DC's Witching Hour and will feature 3, seven page stories, with shock endings, per issue.

For the many, many fans who have asked me about Jim Steranko's "Talon"...Jim tells me that it has been set aside for the moment. It's Jim's property and he will have it published at some future date.

I'm told that Sal Buscema may be doing The Avengers.

S.H.I.E.L.D. may be brought back as a bi-monthly, with Herb Trimpe as the artist.

By this time most of you know that Jack Kirby has moved to California. I include this fact, just in case you didn't.

The Heap is coming to Comic Crusader!

The John McGeehan contest, that was presented in issue #3 of this publication, has as yet gone unsolved. I hereby declare the contest void. Perhaps I'll run another one, a little easier, in a future issue.

In closing, if any of you fans come across anything you think might be of interest to other fans, write and let me know. I'll print it here. After all, this is the Fanzine With The Fan In Mind. See you next ish.....MLG.

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